The Weather

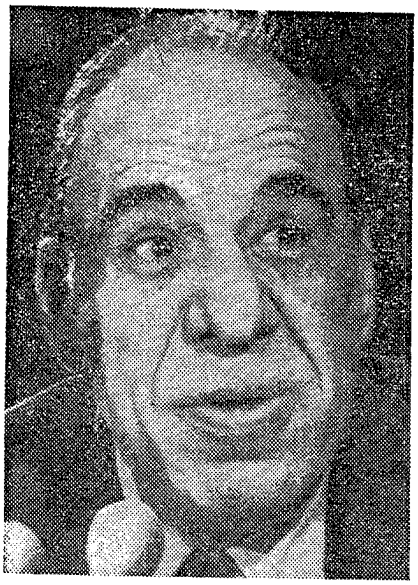
Today—Sunny, high in 60s, low in 30s. Chance of precipitation near zero today, 10 per cent tonight. Saturday—Cloudy, high in 50s. Yesterday — 3 p.m. AQI, 44; Temp. range, 61-28. Details are on Page C2.

The Washing

.00th Year · No. 68

© 1977, The Washington Post Co.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 1



REP. HENRY B. GONZALEZ
. . . charges "divisive, deceitful conduct"

Rep. Gonzalez Trying

By George Lardner Jr.
Washington Post Staff Writer

House Assassinations Committee Chairman Henry B. Gonzalez (D-Tex.) yesterday abruptly ordered the dismissal of chief counsel Richard A. Sprague, but Sprague refused to leave and remained holed up in his offices on Capitol Hill.

In a flurry of letters to Speaker Thomas P. (Tip) O'Neill Jr. (D-Mass.) and other key members of Congress, Gonzalez angrily accused Sprague of "divisive and deceitful conduct" and said the sputtering investigation could not possibly succeed unless he were fired.

The latest brouhaha in the life of the beleaguered committee was triggered earlier this week when Gonzalez made an effort to economize by calling for at least a temporary cutback in its 73-member staff. The new chairman apparently was rebuffed, first at a meeting with Sprague in Gonzalez' office Tuesday morning and then by other members of the committee at a secret "informal" meeting later in the day.

A Keystone Kops flavor was added to the dispute when Gonzalez ordered Capitol Hill police to make sure Sprague left his offices in the old FBI Identification Building by 5 p.m., and then had those orders countermanded, apparently by Del. Walter E. Fauntroy (D-D.C.).

About 90 minutes later, evidently after a rash of phone calls to members scattered about the country for

ton Post

1977 Phone (202) 223-6000 Classified 223-6200 Circulation 223-6100 Higher beyond Metropolitan area See Box A2 15c

Index

80 Pages
4 Sections

Amusements	B 9	Gardens	D12
Classified	C10	Metro	C 1
Comics	D13	Religion	C 8
Crossword	D13	Sports	D 1
Editorials	A22	Style	B 1
Financial	D 7	TV-Radio	B 8

to Fire Sprague

the long holiday recess, Fauntroy handed Sprague a letter of support bearing the names of all members of the 12-member committee except for Chairman Gonzalez.

The letter pronounced Gonzalez' action "invalid," said only the committee had such authority, and directed Sprague "to disregard Mr. Gonzalez' order terminating your employment and his instructions that you vacate the offices of the select committee by 5 p.m. of this date. The entire committee, apart from the chairman, so directs you."

By then, Gonzalez was in the air, on the way home to San Antonio, where, he told the rest of the committee in a "Dear Colleague" letter, he would remain until Sunday evening.

The confrontation left the House inquiry into the murders of President Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr. on shakier ground than ever. Alarmed by Sprague's ambitious $6.5 million budget and questionable investigative techniques he had proposed, the House delayed re-establishing the committee until last week and then did so only on a temporary basis, giving the panel until March 31 to settle down and come back for a permanent charter.

In his letter to other committee members, Gonzalez accused Sprague in effect of a rule-or-ruin approach to the investigation and protested that under the present circumstances, "there is no way that this committee

See SPRAGUE, A17, Col. 1

RICHARD A. SPRAGUE
... refuses to leave committee offices

SPRAGUE, From A1

can function effectively or carry out its responsibilities to the House."

"I am confident that we can carry on a successful investigation without Mr. Sprague," Gonzalez declared. "I am confident that we cannot do so with him."

"This committee has been led into a series of errors by its counsel; its work has been without organization and direction; its official reports and documents have been of wholly unacceptable quality," the chairman's letter continued. "These are matters that must be remedied if this investigation is to progress."

Sprague had no comment except to state through a spokesman, shortly after 5 p.m., that he was staying on the job because "only the committee has the power" to fire him.

According to several sources, Gonzalez had proposed at a secret comittee meeting Monday that some staffers be dismissed temporaily because the committee's present funding is only $84,000 a month and its payroll amounts to $123,000 a month. A decison was postpone dto Tuesday so that Sprague could be heard. He opposed the move, pointing out that many staffers had already taken a voluntary 35 per cent pay cut.

No vote was taken but it was clear that Sprague had a majority of the committee on his side.